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LARRY FREUND/BELGRADE

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HUNGARY-PRIVATE FARMS SUPPORTED

ANNCR:

WHILE STATE FARMS ARE THE RULE IN EASTERN EUROPE, THERE ARE STILL SOME IMPORTANT EXCEPTIONS. VOA CORRESPONDENT LARRY FREUND REPORTS FROM THE TOWN OF HERNAD, HUNGARY.

VOICE:

A COUPLE OF THOUSAND HEADS SWIVELED AROUND TO FACE THE DOOR WHEN GUESTS ENTERED A MODERN, MECHANIZED, OIL-HEATED BARN IN THE TOWN OF HERNAD, HUNGARY. HERNAD IS ABOUT AN HOUR'S DRIVE SOUTH OF BUDAPEST, A FARMING AREA NOW MADE RELATIVELY PROSPEROUS BY THE PRESENCE OF AN EFFICIENT AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE PRODUCING AND PROCESSING -- AMONG OTHER THINGS -- MILLIONS OF CHICKENS A YEAR. THE MODERN BARN POPULATED BY THE THOUSANDS OF TWO-WEEK OLD CHICKS DOES NOT, IN FACT, BELONG TO THE COOPERATIVE. IT IS THE PROPERTY OF THE MECHANIC, IN HIS FORTIES, WHO WORKS FOR THE COOPERATIVE AND WHO IN HIS SPARETIME, TOGETHER WITH HIS WIFE, RAISES SOME FIFTEEN THOUSAND BROILER CHICKENS A YEAR.

THERE ARE NEARLY SIXTY OTHER PRIVATE CHICKEN BARNs IN AND AROUND HERNAD -- EACH OF THEM PRODUCING CHICKENS THAT ARE SOLD TO THE COOPERATIVE FOR PROCESSING AND MARKETING. THE COOPERATIVE ENCOURAGES THE PRIVATE PRODUCERS BY PROVIDING CREDITS AND EQUIPMENT AMONG OTHER THINGS. NEARLY ONE TENTH OF ALL THE CHICKENS PROCESSED IN THE COOPERATIVE COME FROM THE PRIVATE BARNs MANY OF THE FOWL DESTINED FOR DINNER PLATES IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES -- A KEY FACTOR AS HUNGARY PUSHES FOR HIGHER EXPORT EARNINGS TO EASE ITS PRESENT DEFICIT.

MOST PEOPLE IN HERNAD HAVE THEIR OWN HOUSEHOLD GARDEN PLOTS, ABOUT HALF A HECTARE EACH. ALTOGETHER, SOME FOUR MILLION PEOPLE IN HUNGARY, ABOUT FOUR OUT OF EVERY TEN HUNGARIANS, ARE INVOLVED IN PRIVATE FARMING ON MORE THAN ONE MILLION HECTARES OF LAND. SOME DO IT AS A FULL-TIME JOB, AND OTHERS, LIKE THE CHICKEN GROWERS IN HERNAD AS A PART-TIME EFFORT TO MAKE MORE MONEY. AN OFFICIAL ESTIMATES THAT AN AVERAGE OF ONE-FOURTH OF THE MONTHLY INCOME OF THE COOPERATIVE WORKERS IN HERNAD COMES FROM THE PRIVATE PLOTS, SOME MORE, SOME LESS.

NATIONALLY, ABOUT ONE THIRD OF HUNGARY'S AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT COMES FROM THE RELATIVELY SMALL PRIVATE FARMING PLOTS, INCLUDING MORE THAN HALF OF THE PORK AND ABOUT FORTY-FIVE PER CENT OF THE CHICKENS, ACCORDING TO HUNGARIAN FIGURES. OFFICIAL IDEOLOGY IN HUNGARY IS AIMED AT REDUCING PRIVATE FARMING, AS IN POLAND, WHERE PRIVATE AGRICULTURE ALSO EXISTS ON A LARGE-SCALE. BUT AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS A PRACTICAL RECOGNITION THAT THE PRIVATE PLOTS HAVE MADE VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COUNTRY'S FARM OUTPUT. AND IN A COUNTRY SHORT OF RAW MATERIALS, SOME EXPERTS BELIEVE HUNGARY'S RELATIVELY ABUNDANT FOOD PRODUCTION MAY LOOK EVEN MORE IMPORTANT IN THE YEARS AHEAD. THUS, THERE HAS SEEMED TO BE AN UNSTATED WISH: NOT TO KILL THE GOOSE, OR IN THIS CASE, THE CHICKEN, LAYING THE GOLDEN EGG. THE HUNGARIAN AGRICULTURE MINISTER HAS ARGUED THAT THE PRIVATE FARMS ARE NOT NUISANCES, AND HE HAS WARNED THAT INDIFFERENCE TO PRIVATE FARMING, COULD HAVE IRREPARABLE CONSEQUENCES.